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200 Soviet spies nest at U.N., Senate panel report charges

By Charles Wheeler
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Of the 800 Soviet employees at the United Nations in New York, 200 are spies who use their positions to gather intelligence and promote Soviet foreign policy goals, according to a Senate Intelligence Committee report released yesterday.

"The Soviets are using employment at the United Nations as a front for their spies, and we must do what we can to prevent it," said Sen. William V. Roth, R-Del., an Intelligence Committee member who has introduced legislation that would restrict travel by Soviet U.N. employees in the same way Soviet diplomats are restricted. "It is a serious security problem."

"My concern was that these individuals can travel freely, with no limitation and with no identification," Sen. Roth said. "They can go freely to Silicon Valley or attend technical conferences that deal with classified information — all they have to do is say they are U.N. personnel."

Sen. Roth's legislation would apply the Foreign Missions Act of 1982 to foreign employees assigned to the U.N. Secretariat whenever the act is applied to diplomats of that government. That would allow the State Department to restrict travel and authorize the FBI to monitor the activities of virtually all U.N. employees from the Eastern Bloc nations.

"This has been a major gap in our security network," said Sen. Roth. "At least we would enable the FBI to know where they're going."

The preliminary summary of the Intelligence Committee report was based on FBI information and testimony by former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. A full report is to be released next week.

"The Soviet intelligence services use their U.N. assignments to collect information on U.N. activities; to spot, assess and recruit agents; to support worldwide intelligence operations; and to collect scientific and technical information of value to the U.S.S.R.," according to the report.

"The Soviets have gained significant advantage over the West through their comprehensive approach to the strategy and tactics of personnel placement and their detailed plans for using the U.N. to achieve Soviet foreign policy and intelligence objectives," the report said.

"Soviet Secretariat officials receive instructions directly from Moscow on propaganda placements for coverage in the Soviet media and to arrange for the U.N. secretary general to make favorable reference to statements of Soviet leaders or announcements of the Central Committee. Documents supporting Soviet interests are entered into U.N. records and later presented as a U.N. document in Soviet propaganda placements," said the report.

"Key Soviet personnel have been placed in U.N. offices responsible for U.N. relations with non-governmental organizations and Soviet front groups," the report said. "Approximately one-fourth of the Soviets in the U.N. Secretariat are intelligence officers and many more are co-opted by the KGB or GRU. All Soviets in the Secretariat must respond to KGB requests for assistance." The KGB is Moscow's intelligence branch; the GRU is the military intelligence arm.

Employees of the U.N. Secretariat "are supposedly international civil servants, owing their primary loyalties to the United Nations, not to their country of origin," said Sen. Roth. "In reality, several Eastern Bloc governments refuse to permit this practice, allowing their personnel to work in the Secretariat only on temporary assignment" so their primary allegiance can remain with their governments.

Soviet U.N. employees are engaged in a never-ending effort to steal U.S. technology, according to an aide for Sen. Roth, who asked to remain anonymous.

One Soviet employee posed as a German U.N. official involved in Law of the Sea negotiations, said the aide. The impostor traveled around the country for some time, visiting U.S. firms that were conducting

oceanographic research. Finally, he was exposed and deported, the aide said. That type of tactic is used regularly by the Soviets, according to the aide.

Another Soviet practice at the U.N. nets the Soviet government about \$20 million yearly in hard currency, the aide said.

Soviet U.N. employees are assigned a Soviet civil servant rating, which might pay a salary of \$10,000 per year, plus a small expense allowance, the aide said. But the U.N. salary for that position usually is much higher — maybe as much as \$80,000-90,000 per year, he said. The Soviet employee is requested or forced to pay back the difference in the two salaries, which ends up in the Soviet treasury, according to the aide.

A spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar said he knew of allegations "that Soviet nationals are forced to give back a percent" of their earnings, but that he had no knowledge "if they do or they don't" carry out that practice.